

Child Care Center Inspection

Summary: Local health departments inspect child care centers on behalf of the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) to assure health and safety standards are met as part of the licensing process. While most facilities provide a safe and healthy environment for children, there are times when local agencies and the state health department must take action to prevent a potential tragedy.

Detailed story:

A routine inspection of a child care center by the City of St. Louis Department of Health found several serious violations, including a lack of hot water, a refrigerator that was not cooling properly, leaking and defective plumbing, absence of soap and towels at the hand sinks, and improper use of sanitizers.

The center operator was told specifically what needed to be fixed. Two weeks later, the City Health Department re-inspected the facility and found that there was still leaking plumbing, no hot water, and the facility did not have a building occupancy permit.

The City Health Department contacted the DHSS, which inspected the facility again about two weeks later. They found a lack of adequate cooking equipment, a defective hot water heater, a hole that opened to the outside in the rear wall of the playroom, and outdated milk being served to the children, as well as other violations.

The Missouri Department of Public Safety also performed an annual fire safety inspection about the same time. Several serious violations were found, including unsafe electrical wiring and inadequate fire extinguishers and fire alarm system. The heating element had been removed from the gas water heater and replaced with an electric range element that was powered via an extension cord, which was hot to the touch. Another water heater was revealed to the DHSS inspector and it had been completely walled off with no access of any kind, which is in violation of local building codes and the state fire code.

The City of St. Louis Department of Public Safety condemned the building and DHSS revoked the child care facility license on June 20, 2013. The owners then made the necessary repairs, the condemnation was lifted, and DHSS granted a short-term child care license until October 30, 2013. The facility is pending final approval from the City of St. Louis Building Division.